

# Imperial Federation League.

## FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL, 1889-90.

30, CHARLES STREET,

BERKELEY SQUARE, LONDON, W.,

*May 19th, 1890.*

1. The Council of the League has great satisfaction in being able to place before the Member of the Imperial Federation League a record of steady and unremitting progress as the history of the working of the year 1889-90.

2. The proposal made by Sir Charles Tupper, High Commissioner for Canada, at the Annual Dinner of the League in June, that a second Conference of the Representatives of the Self-governing Colonies should be held, was promptly taken into consideration by Executive and Council, with the result that communications were opened between our President and the Prime Minister with a view to a Deputation from the League waiting upon the latter, in order to press upon him the desirability of such a Conference being summoned at the first convenient date.

3. After some correspondence, in the course of which Lord Salisbury expressed his readiness to receive any suggestions which the League desired to make for the purpose of modifying the relation between this country and the Colonies, it was agreed that Lord Salisbury should be asked to name a date during the winter for the reception of the Deputation.

The date fixed by the Prime Minister was January 10th, and the arrangements had been completed when it was found necessary, owing to Lord Salisbury's illness, to postpone the matter indefinitely.

It is, however, understood that the promise to receive the Deputation holds good, and the Council will, at a suitable opportunity, bring the matter again before Lord Salisbury. But in the view of the Council, circumstances have changed for the moment, and the absorption of public attention in Australia by the question of Australian Federation appears to them to make it desirable to postpone the suggestion for an Imperial Conference.

4. The proposal for another Conference, similar to that of 1887, has met with a large amount of support in all parts of the Empire, showing with what confidence the results of such a gathering are regarded.

5. As a result of this action on the part of the Council, and of the discussion which preceded it, the Council has adopted the following resolution, indicative of the policy by which it is intended to proceed :—

“That the establishment of periodical Conferences of Representatives of the Self-governing Communities of the Empire should be the first aim of the Imperial Federation League.”

6. This announcement of policy has met with general approval, the Imperial Federation League in Canada adopting the following resolution with regard to it :—

“That the Council of the Imperial Federation League in Canada, at a meeting specially called to consider the question, are of opinion that a Conference of the Mother Country and the Self-governing Colonies should be summoned by the Imperial Government at the earliest possible moment. And this Council are further of opinion that the most important question that should be brought before such a Conference is that of Inter-Imperial Trade.”

7. A resolution of the Associated Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom in October declared that, “In view of the Commercial interests of the Empire, the time has now arrived when a Conference should be held with the object of arriving at a satisfactory solution of the question of Imperial Federation.”

8. The mission undertaken last year by Mr. G. R. Parkin through the Dominion of Canada and the Colonies of Australasia has proved a signal success. His eloquent addresses have stirred the public mind in those countries, and his numerous interviews with persons of influence in every class have made the object for which the League is striving clear beyond the possibility of any but deliberate misunderstanding.

At the time of his visit and since, the subject of “Imperial Federation,” or, as translated by Mr. Parkin, “National Unity,” has been actively canvassed both in the press and on the platform.

9. The League in Canada has largely extended its operations during the past year, and has been carefully organised upon a thoroughly representative basis. It now consists of twenty-six Branches, sending representatives to a Central Council, which appoints an Executive Committee and

Officers. In addition to the President of the League there is a Vice-President for every province of the Dominion, and the chain of its branches extends from sea to sea.

Six hundred copies of "Imperial Federation" are distributed monthly in the Dominion through its agency, in addition to its own literature printed in Canada.

10. As anticipated in last year's report, a strong feeling continues to exist in Canada against the continuance in commercial treaties with foreign countries of clauses preventing the different portions of the Empire from making such internal fiscal arrangements between themselves as they may think proper. The League in Canada, at its Annual Meeting held in January last, passed a resolution condemning such stipulations. Most of the treaties obnoxious to this view terminate in 1892, and it is to be expected that strong efforts will be made by the League in Canada to obtain the abrogation of such clauses where they exist, and the provision under all treaties that the favoured nation clause shall not have the effect of extending to foreign countries the advantage of any preferential arrangement between different parts of the Empire. Any action in this direction taken by the Dominion Government will have the hearty support of the Council.

11. The desire expressed by the Council of the League in Canada for discussion of Inter-Imperial Trade at the next Conference has met with some response in the United Kingdom, the following resolution having been unanimously passed by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce:—

"That while this Council approve of the objects of the Imperial Federation League, as set forth in their circular of November 13th last (Report of Commercial Committee), they are of opinion that the primary essential condition of Imperial Federation is a Customs Union of the Empire."

12. An important declaration was made by Sir John Macdonald, the Premier of Canada, in his speech at Kingston, in December, to the following effect:—

"I am satisfied that the large majority of the people of Canada are in favour of the continuance and perpetuation of the connection between the Dominion and the Mother Country. There is nothing to gain and everything to lose by their separation. I believe that if any party or person were to announce or to declare such a thing—either by annexation with the great Republic to the south of us, or by declaring for independence—I believe that the people of Canada would say 'no.' (Loud applause.) I say that any separation from the United Kingdom would bring ruin and misfortune."

13. This was followed by the adoption in January of a loyal Address to the Queen by the Dominion House of Commons, which was moved by Mr. Mulock, a Member of the Opposition, seconded by a French Canadian Member, and carried unanimously by a full House.

The text of the Address is as follows:—

"To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.

"Most Gracious Sovereign,—We, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of Canada, in Parliament assembled, desire most earnestly, in our own name and on behalf of the people whom we represent, to renew the expression of our unswerving loyalty and devotion to your Majesty's person and Government.

"We have learned, with feelings of entire disapproval, that various public statements have been made, calling in question the loyalty of the people of Canada to the political union now happily existing between this Dominion and the British Empire, and representing it as the desire of the people of Canada to sever such connection.

"We desire, therefore, to assure your Majesty that such statements are wholly incorrect representations of the sentiments and aspirations of the people of Canada, who are among your Majesty's most loyal subjects, devotedly attached to the political union existing between Canada and the Mother Country, and earnestly desire its continuance.

"We feel assured that your Majesty will not allow any such statements, emanating from any source whatever, to lessen your Majesty's confidence in the loyalty of your Canadian subjects to your Majesty's person and Government, and will accept our assurances of the contentment of your Majesty's Canadian subjects with the political connection between Canada and the rest of the British Empire, and of their fixed resolve to aid in maintaining the same.

"We pray that the blessings of your Majesty's reign may, for your people's sake, be long continued."

14. The significance of this action of the Dominion Parliament cannot be over-rated, and the League in Canada is to be congratulated upon this most satisfactory outcome of its steady and persevering work during the past three years.

15. The questions arising out of the claims of the United States over the seal fisheries in the Behring Sea, and the encroachments of the French beyond their fishing rights on the shores of Newfoundland, have accentuated to some extent the question of the relations of the various parts of the Empire to its Foreign Policy, which the League has always been anxious to see placed on a more sound and definite footing.

16. During the four months which he spent in Australasia, Mr. Parkin was in personal contact with most of the leading statesmen and politicians of the Colonies which he visited, and, with but few



exceptions, he found them favourable to the object of the League, though in some cases averse to taking a prominent part in advocating Imperial Federation.

17. A decided step has been taken in the direction of Australian Federation. A Conference of the leading Australasian statesmen has been held, and resolutions declaring the necessity of combination under one Government have been passed. It has been further recommended that a formal convention of authorised representatives shall meet in February to discuss the details of a scheme of Federation.

18. It is to be especially noted that the meeting of Australian statesmen for the purpose of securing this union was the occasion of some of the strongest declarations of the necessity for maintaining the connection of Australia with the Empire, which have yet been heard.

19. It is evident that the Federation of a group of Colonies should not be regarded as antagonistic to the larger Federation of the Empire, but rather, as is so well shown in the case of Canada, as a step towards the same end. This has been the view of the Council, and the movement has throughout been regarded with the greatest satisfaction.

20. The season of meetings in England was commenced in November by a large meeting held in the Egyptian Hall of the Mansion House, at which the Lord Mayor presided, supported by the President of the League, the Earl of Carnarvon, Cardinal Manning, Lord Brassey, and many others; and it was terminated in April by a meeting at the People's Palace at which H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge was in the Chair, and at which much enthusiasm was shown.

21. At the large majority of the meetings Mr. Parkin was the chief speaker, and he has delivered no less than thirty-seven addresses during the winter. In the words of the *Leeds Mercury* :—

“ By his enthusiasm, his comprehensive grasp of his subject, both in its broad aspects and in its important details, and his anxious care to elucidate every question raised by his hearers, Mr. Parkin has produced a deep and lasting impression upon the minds of a large number of the people of this country.”

22. The resolution adopted at Leeds, on 27th March, which may be said to have concluded his campaign in Yorkshire, was forwarded to the Prime Minister, and the following reply was received :—

“ I am deeply sensible of the importance of a movement which has for its object to draw closer the ties which bind England and her Colonies together, and to secure a fuller co-operation between them for the defence and advancement of common interest. These are objects which Her Majesty's Government, and I believe all statesmen of all parties, have earnestly at heart, and no effort will be wanting on our part to further the attainment of these important ends by the adoption of any measures it is in our power to take, and which are likely to be efficacious for the purpose.”

23. Lord Hartington wrote, concerning the same occasion :—

“ I believe that whatever may have been the case in former times, no statesman or party is now indifferent to the importance, and even the necessity, of drawing closer the bonds which bind England and her Colonies together, and of securing a permanent and complete co-operation between them for the advancement and defence of common interests. The only point on which differences of opinion may exist is as to the means by which this object may be effected, and I am glad that the attention of the great industrial communities of Yorkshire has been directed to the necessity of finding a practical solution of the problem.”

24. The League is to be congratulated upon the announcement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the postage to Her Majesty's Dominions is henceforward reduced to twopence halfpenny. From the date of the first meeting of the Conference which resulted in the formation of this League, the reduction of the postage between all parts of the Empire to a uniform and moderate rate has been recognised as one of the greatest aids to be sought in the attainment of its object, and it has the satisfaction of knowing that the important step now taken has been mainly due to the untiring exertions of an original member of its Council, Mr. J. Henniker Heaton, M.P. Great as is the advantage which has thus been gained to the cause of Imperial Federation, it is felt that the League should not rest satisfied with any arrangement which does not place the correspondence addressed to British Dominions in all parts of the world upon an equal footing.

25. With this view the following resolutions were adopted by the Postal Committee of the League and circulated to the Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom, shortly before the introduction of the Budget :—

- (1) That the introduction of a cheap uniform rate of postage, and a uniform postage stamp for use between all parts of the Empire, would not only be of great material advantage, but would also mark the fact of Imperial unity, and help to ensure its permanence.
- (2) That it is desirable that such portion as may be necessary of any future increase of net postal revenue in the United Kingdom should be applied to this object.
- (3) That it is desirable that an inquiry, by Royal Commission or otherwise, into the whole question of Imperial inter-communication should be instituted forthwith.

26. The Report of Lord Hartington's Commission upon Naval and Military Administration contains as its most effective clause a suggestion for the formation of a Council of Defence, to be

presided over by the Prime Minister and to include the Parliamentary heads of both Services as well as their professional advisers. This recommendation was found to coincide with that contained in a report of the Defence Committee of the League, published in December, in which it was further proposed that representatives of Colonies contributing to the maintenance of Imperial defence, should be included in such a Council.

27. The Council of the League holds that this suggestion of the Royal Commission offers an excellent opportunity for the introduction of the representative principle, coincident as it may be with the first contribution of the Australian Colonies to the maintenance of the Navy in Australasian waters.

28. The steps taken by the Council to perpetuate the memory of the Right Hon. William Bede Dalley have resulted in the completion, by Sir Edgar Boehm, of a tablet bearing a medallion portrait of the deceased statesman, which, by the permission of the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral, will shortly be placed there.

29. The question of the admission of Colonial Securities to the advantages of the Trust Investment List has formed the subject of some discussion in the Press, and of an investigation by a Departmental Committee of the Treasury in which Representatives of the Colonies took part.

30. The want of any method in the organisation of the League by which the individual expression of the United Kingdom can be obtained has made itself largely felt, and a movement in favour of combining the Branches now existing in the United Kingdom into an organisation similar to that perfected in Canada has received the sanction of the Executive Committee, subject to the necessary financial arrangements being made. It is believed that this arrangement will not only increase the activity of the League in the United Kingdom but will also strengthen the position of the Council, which will then cease to hold the dual position which it now occupies in representing at once the United Kingdom and the Empire at large.

31. The monthly Journal of the League has maintained its high reputation.

32. As regards the general position of the League, it may be said that while the effect it has produced during the five years of its existence upon the disposition of the public mind towards the future of the Empire has been almost phenomenal, yet the very extent of this success renders it imperative that the League's activity should be unceasingly developed in order that it should not merely strive to keep pace with the rapidly succeeding phases of the question, but should be able to secure the full advantage of the progress made.

33. Hitherto, the work of the League has been carried on with funds altogether inadequate to the dimensions of the undertaking, for which it is responsible. The temporary arrangement by which the expenses of the League have been met, comes to an end with the current year, and the Council has given directions for a systematic application to be made throughout the United Kingdom during the next half-year for the means required to place the League in a position to deal adequately with the great and growing work which it has now before it.

The Council is confident that this application will be readily responded to wherever the past work of the League and that which still remains to be done is understood; but it is at the same time necessary to state that the Council would incur a grave responsibility by entering upon further operations without the provision of such ample means as will leave it free to utilise the whole strength of the organisation on occasions of critical importance such as will infallibly arise before the object of the League is attained.

*(Adopted at the Annual General Meeting, Thursday, May 22nd.)*



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The Council is confident that this application will be readily responded to wherever the past work of the League and that which still remains to be done is understood; but it is at the same time necessary to state that the Council would incur a grave responsibility by entering upon further operations without the provision of such ample means as will leave it free to utilise the whole strength of the organisation on occasions of critical importance such as will infallibly arise before the object of the League is attained.

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